



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 17, 2004

Mr. Clay T. Glover
Feldman & Rogers, L.L.P.
5718 Westheimer, Suite 1200
Houston, Texas 77057

OR2004-4946

Dear Mr. Glover:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 203624.

The Fort Bend Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to the location of specified parcels of land and the timeframe of negotiations for the district's purchase of these parcels. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.105 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information. We have also considered comments submitted by the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.304 (providing that member of public may submit comments stating why information should or should not be released).

Section 552.105 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information relating to:

- (1) the location of real or personal property for a public purpose prior to public announcement of the project; or
- (2) appraisals or purchase price of real or personal property for a public purpose prior to the formal award of contracts for the property.

Gov't Code § 552.105. Section 552.105 is designed to protect a governmental body's planning and negotiating position with regard to particular transactions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 564 (1990), 357 (1982), 310 (1982). Information that pertains to such negotiations may be withheld under section 552.105 for so long as the transaction relating to the negotiations is not complete. *See* Open Records Decision No. 310 (1982). Under

section 552.105, a governmental body may withhold information “which, if released, would impair or tend to impair [its] ‘planning and negotiating position in regard to particular transactions.’” Open Records Decision No. 357 at 3 (1982) (quoting Open Records Decision No. 222 (1979)). The question of whether specific information, if publicly released, would impair a governmental body’s planning and negotiating position in regard to a particular transaction is a question of fact. *See* Open Records Decision No. 564 at 2 (1990). Accordingly, this office will accept a governmental body’s good faith determination in this regard, unless the contrary is clearly shown as a matter of law. *Id.*

You state that the submitted information relates to the locations and purchase prices of real property that the district is currently considering acquiring for new school campuses. You further explain that “at this time, there is no active proposal on the table” concerning these properties. You also assert that release of “such information would result in increased competition, higher prices, and the loss of confidence by property owners and developers that such real estate negotiations would remain confidential until final.” Based upon your representations and our review of the submitted information, we agree that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.105.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov’t Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body’s intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general’s Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Amy Peterson".

Amy D. Peterson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

ADP/sdk

Ref: ID# 203624

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Liz Mitton
846 Merrick Drive
Sugar Land, Texas 77478
(w/o enclosures)